

ORDER

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

8000. 73

6/21/91

SUBJ: Aviation Safety Hotline Program

1. **PURPOSE.** This order prescribes the operations, responsibilities, and requirements of the Aviation Safety Hotline Program.

2. **DISTRIBUTION.** This order is distributed to division level to the Associate Administrators for Airway Facilities, Air Traffic, Regulation and Certification, and Aviation Standards; to the Chief Counsel, the Assistant Chief Counsel for Regulations and Enforcement, and each Regional Assistant Chief Counsel; to the branch level in the offices of Civil Aviation Security Operations, Aviation Safety Oversight, Safety Quality Assurance, Aviation Safety Analysis, Air Traffic Effectiveness, Air Traffic Systems Management, Aviation Medicine, and Management Systems; to the branch level in Systems Maintenance, Air Traffic Rules and Procedures, Flight Standards, and Aircraft Certification Services; to the Administrator's Hotline Office, and the Emergency Operations Staff; to the branch level in the regional Aircraft Certification, Airports, Air Traffic, Airway Facilities, Aviation Medicine, Flight Standards, and Civil Aviation Security divisions, and all regional military representatives; with limited distribution to Airway Facilities, Air Traffic, Flight Standards, and Aircraft Certification field offices.

3. **BACKGROUND.**

a. The Secretary of Transportation announced that on June 28, 1985, the FAA would activate a toll-free hotline to promote aviation safety.

b. On July 1, 1985, the Administrator established the Aviation Safety Hotline Program. The toll-free hotline, (800) 255-1111, provides a means for persons with knowledge of unsafe aviation situations, improper record keeping, or safety violations to report these without fear of recrimination.

4. **DEFINITIONS.**

a. Aviation Safety Hotline Information System (ASHIS) - A computerized data base system used to coordinate the hotline data and tracking of reports, investigations, statistics, etc.

b. Blue Sheets - Blue intake sheets completed by Hotline Operations Specialists on the Administrator's Hotline Staff which contain information provided by the caller as well as the

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caller's identity. Information is also recorded from anonymous callers.

c. Brief - The computer (ASHIS) white copy synopsis of the call (from blue sheet) without the caller's identity.

d. FAA Hotline Office - Location of telephone and Hotline Operations Specialists who answer phones for the Administrator's Hotline, the Aviation Safety Hotline, and the FAA Consumer Hotline (as necessary), and enter reported or "caller" information into the computer systems.

e. FAA Operations Center - Location of the FAA Headquarters Operations Center essential to the conduct of FAA activities on a 24-hour daily basis. The Operations Center shall provide telephone coverage to the Aviation Safety Hotline beyond that provided during normal business hours by the hotline office staff.

f. Aviation Safety Hotline Program Manager - The program manager and coordinator of the information flow between the FAA Hotline Office, the technical Brief Managers, the regional Aviation Safety Hotline contacts, and field offices.

g. Brief Managers - Specialists with the Office of Aviation Safety Oversight with technical background who review the hotline data and evaluate investigations.

h. Regional Hotline Contacts - Those designated in regional headquarters to assign and track the Aviation Safety Hotline activities and investigations in their region.

i. Action Offices - Headquarters, regional, or field offices that have been designated responsibility for investigating a safety issue resulting from an Aviation Safety Hotline call.

5. SCOPE. This order applies to offices and services in the Washington headquarters and regional divisions which are responsible for investigating a safety issue.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES. The Office of Aviation Safety Oversight is responsible for managing the Aviation Safety Hotline and assuring that all issues raised by this system are adequately addressed.

7. PROCEDURES.

a. The FAA Hotline Operations Specialist receives calls, determines appropriateness for safety hotline, and completes the hotline blue sheets. Letters addressed to the Hotline Office reporting unsafe aviation situations shall be treated as an incoming caller report. The operation specialist transfers the information within 1 working day, into the ASHIS.

b. The operation specialist insures that as much pertinent information as possible is obtained from the caller (such as, date, location, aircraft registration number, company/airline, names of individuals with allegations made against them, etc.), especially for anonymous calls.

c. FAA Hotline Office personnel shall provide immediate notification to either the Aviation Safety Hotline Program Manager, the Flight Operations and Maintenance Division Manager, or the Director, Office of Aviation Safety Oversight, if the information contained in the hotline call warrants immediate action. The manager notified shall immediately initiate action to notify appropriate office(s) within the FAA. The Aviation Safety Hotline Program Manager shall provide and update necessary telephone and pager numbers to assure communications access for this purpose.

d. An FAA Hotline Office staff member shall handcarry the blue sheets, recording the Aviation Safety Hotline calls for the day, in a "To be opened by addressee only" envelope addressed to the Aviation Safety Hotline Program Manager, to the Office of the Assistant Administrator for Aviation Safety, prior to the close of business each working day for pickup the following morning. In urgent action cases, arrangements shall be made for immediate pickup or delivery of the blue sheet, if needed. Hotline Office staff members are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of caller's identity and security of reports which make allegations against any individual or company.

e. The Operations Center shall provide telephone coverage beyond that provided during normal business hours by the hotline office staff. The Operations Center shall assess each call to determine whether it warrants immediate notification to the responsible FAA organization. If so, a staff member from the Office of the Assistant Administrator for Aviation Safety shall be notified. A chain of command system shall be used for this notification to the Manager, Flight Operations and Maintenance Division, Director, Office of Aviation Safety Oversight, Deputy Assistant or Assistant Administrator for Aviation Safety. Operations Center staff members are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of caller's identity and security of reports which make allegations against any individual or company.

f. The Aviation Safety Hotline Program Manager shall obtain the blue sheets from the Office of the Assistant Administrator for Aviation Safety daily, review blue sheet information against the information entered in the ASHIS, and enter subject category, brief manager, and region responsible for the action. If letters specifically addressed to the Safety Hotline (program) are received in the program office, the Program Manager shall prepare a blue sheet and enter the information in the ASHIS for appropriate action.

g. The Aviation Safety Hotline Program Manager shall give briefs to the appropriate Brief Manager. Reports which make allegations against a specific individual(s) or company will be kept in a "To be opened by addressee only" envelope addressed to the appropriate Brief Manager and filed in locked containers when not in use. The Aviation Safety Hotline Program Manager shall establish procedures for maintaining the confidentiality of caller's identity and security of these reports.

h. The Brief Manager shall review each Aviation Safety Hotline report for technical accuracy and completeness and contact the caller if more information is needed. The Brief Manager shall determine if there is sufficient information of a potential FAR violation or safety issue to warrant regional investigation. The Brief Manager shall include appropriate FAR numbers (if applicable) on the ASHIS brief and return it to the Aviation Safety Hotline Program Manager with a recommended course of action. Security of the blue sheet, or caller's name and number, shall be maintained by the Aviation Safety Hotline Program Manager and Brief Managers at all times. The Brief Managers shall maintain the confidentiality of caller's identity (if requested) and security of reports which make allegations against any individual or company.

i. The Aviation Safety Hotline Program Manager shall enter into the ASHIS any FAR numbers or other pertinent information received from the Brief Manager, enter date actioned, and reprint the brief. One copy shall be assigned to the appropriate region (via facsimile or electronic mail) or assigned to a headquarters action office, and another shall be maintained as an office file copy. Any superseded copies of the brief will be disposed of.

j. The Regional Hotline Contacts shall maintain confidentiality of reports which make allegations against any individual or company and assure security provisions of this order are implemented.

k. The Regional Hotline Contacts shall assign action for the investigation of the Aviation Safety Hotline reports in their region, and forward the field investigative report summary to the hotline program manager in writing within 30 days from the date action is forwarded to the Regional Hotline Contact. If the investigation is prolonged, an extension request (via telephone) shall be coordinated with the Aviation Safety Hotline Program Manager.

l. The Action Office shall conduct a thorough investigation of alleged criminal or FAR violations or potential unsafe situations, coordinating aspects of the investigation with other regions, if necessary.

m. The Action Office may contact the Aviation Safety Hotline

or Brief Managers for the caller's name and number to be used for FAA investigative purposes only. The Action Office shall maintain confidentiality of reports which make allegations against any individual or company.

n. The Action Office shall provide a written report of the investigative results to the Aviation Safety Hotline Program Manager (cc to the regional hotline contact) within the 30-day suspense date. The action office should include in the report whether enforcement action has been initiated for an alleged FAR violation and the FAR number(s) being cited (if available), that it could not be determined whether a FAR violation had occurred, or a description of other actions taken to correct unsafe conditions. ►

o. The Aviation Safety Hotline Program Manager shall summarize investigative reports from the regional contacts, update the ASHIS by entering a summary of the investigative findings, date of action office correspondence, and date of update. The Aviation Safety Hotline Program Manager shall provide the appropriate Brief Manager with a copy for review.

(1) Review all final reports from action offices within 7 days of receipt to determine, if enforcement action is being initiated, whether the FAR number(s) is/are included or a description of other actions taken to correct unsafe conditions. The action office shall be contacted to obtain missing information for inclusion in the final closeout. The Brief Manager shall advise the hotline manager of any necessary follow-up action.

(2) Close each report in the computer system and file a copy with the regional response after Brief Managers determine safety issues have been satisfactorily investigated. If the brief manager determines that the investigative report does not satisfactorily address safety issues, he/she shall advise the hotline program manager who will notify the regional contact that further response is required, or the Brief Manager shall contact the action office for further clarification.

(3) The Aviation Safety Hotline Program Manager shall also:

(a) Update the list of headquarters and regional contacts, telephone numbers, and facsimile numbers.

(b) Provide a weekly report to FAA Hotline Office, through the Manager, Flight Operations and Maintenance Division, Office of Aviation Safety Oversight. This report shall, at a minimum, include briefs of safety hotline calls received for each calendar week.

(c) Provide a monthly summary report and a more detailed quarterly report to the Administrator, Deputy Administrator, Executive Directors, Associate/Assistant

Regional Administrators, and FAA regional Aviation Safety Hotline contacts. This report shall include, at a minimum, statistics and summaries on numbers of calls received and closed, numbers of actual violations and enforcement actions, trends detected, and special issues. Graphs, incoming action, and closeouts for each region will be included in the quarterly reports. Content and format of these reports shall be changed as necessary to best meet changing requirements or interests.

(d) Query the ASHIS at least weekly for briefs past their suspense dates, and forward a summary to Regional Hotline Contacts for followup and response on a monthly basis.

(e) Transfer the action to the FAA Consumer Hotline staff or other appropriate action office if the substance of the call does not relate to a possible FAR violation or safety issue and the caller did not desire confidentiality. A copy of the blue sheet and ASHIS report shall be maintained and the item deleted from the ASHIS by the Hotline Program Manager. The Hotline Operations Specialist who recorded the caller's report shall be notified of the transfer.

(f) Respond to the caller in writing with the results of the investigation if the caller specifically requests feedback and has provided their name and address. This shall be done as quickly as possible after the closeout date.

(g) Periodically review, through the ASHIS terminal, the Consumer Hotline call entries to ensure that no potential FAR violations or safety issues have been inadvertently reported and entered in the wrong system. Coordinate these efforts with the Consumer Hotline staff.

8. SECURITY. Hotline documents and materials shall be provided secure storage and will not be disseminated to persons other than those directly involved in processing, investigating, or resolving the allegations. Each individual handling such materials will:

a. Retain documents containing information which could identify a caller or of allegations against individuals in "To be opened by addressee only" envelopes or covers when not in use.

b. Store all materials in locked files when not necessary for processing or reference.

c. Avoid divulging contents or specifics of hotline reports except as necessary to take action to improve aviation safety or to develop safety statistics or trend analysis. Material shall not be released outside hotline channels without approval of the Aviation Safety Hotline Program Manager except as needed for enforcement action. If the caller has provided their name and requested confidentiality, the caller's identity should not be referred to in

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correspondence except as needed for enforcement action. The caller's identity shall not be included on the brief unless the caller information was obtained from the FAA Consumer Hotline System, or the action is transferred to the DOT Air Travel Consumer Office, and the caller has stated he/she does not wish confidentiality. Release of the caller's identity if confidentiality was requested, or any document which could reveal a caller's identity is prevented under the Freedom of Information Act's Sixth Exemption (5 U.S.C. 522(b)(6))

9. RETENTION OF FILES. Aviation Safety Hotline paper files should be destroyed the 5th calendar year after receipt of the report.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard A. Weiss". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Richard A. Weiss
Director, Office of Aviation
Safety Oversight